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News Release

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U.S. District Court rules that Zimmerman man shot a gray wolf

A United States Magistrate Judge ruled last week that a 46-year-old Zimmerman man had shot and killed a gray wolf near Isabella Township in northern Minnesota during a hunting trip in 2002.

On June 20 in Duluth, Judge Raymond Erickson found that Steven Alan Taylor knowingly killed one gray wolf without being permitted to do so. At the time of the shooting, the gray wolf was listed as a threatened wildlife by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

Taylor was charged on Aug. 9, 2007, and a day-long bench trial took place on Nov. 7, 2007. Judge Erickson has set a tentative sentencing date of Sept. 3.

"People tend to think that they can get away with killing endangered or threatened wildlife, particularly in remote areas where there are few witnesses," said Patrick Lund, Resident Agent in Charge of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's St. Paul office. "This conviction is another reminder that the Service, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the U.S. Attorney's Office takes this kind of crime seriously."

Court testimony indicated that Taylor and his hunting party hunted in that area near Shamrock Lake on Nov. 20-23, 2002. Witnesses testified that they heard two shots, and asked Taylor if he got any deer. Taylor replied that he shot two wolves.

Witnesses also testified that Taylor was using a semi-automatic rifle during that weekend. However, the weapon was later destroyed in 2003 because Taylor felt that he was being watched by the DNR and FWS.

A DNR warden observed a grey wolf that had been shot laying next to a deer stand on Dec. 12, 2002. A necropsy of the wolf determined that it could have been shot by someone in the deer stand, which was used by members of Taylor's hunting party. Two expended shell casings from a semi-automatic rifle were also found near the stand.

When the wolf was first listed as endangered in the 1970s, only a few hundred remained in

Minnesota. Recovery efforts have increased the gray wolf population and helped assure its survival.

Taylor faces a potential maximum penalty of six months imprisonment and a \$25,000 fine. This case is the result of an investigation by FWS and the DNR, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney LeeAnn K. Bell.